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SUBJECT: EMBASSY VISITS AILING IMPRISONED AMERICAN

REF: A) Savage - Platukis email 05/30/08
B) GOB dipnote 19-17/4392 05/30/08

Summary

1. (SBU) Conoff met June 2 with ailing American citizen Emanuel Zeltser who has been held in Belarusian KGB pretrial confinement since March 12. Since the last visit on April 25 Zeltser's health had significantly worsened; he had lost even more weight, had trouble standing and walking, supporting himself by holding onto a chair or the wall alternatively. Zeltser said he is "in a great deal of pain" and cannot sleep as a result. He appeared weak, had trouble concentrating and speaking, and his hands and mouth trembled regularly. Zeltser told Conoff that he can "barely get out of bed" and has a hard time getting up and down the stairs for his occasional interrogations.

2. (SBU) According to Zeltser, the prison doctor has visited him several times and recently prescribed Zeltser to take Zanax, which was given to him and then seized by prison officials who explained that the doctor had "changed his mind." According to Zeltser, the doctor also prescribed him relenium (valium), which he was also not allowed to take. He confirmed that he is not permitted any medications except an herbal supplement that is ineffective in dulling his pain. Other than the lack of medication, Zeltser did not make any other complaints about his treatment, even upon questioning. (Comment: As in previous visits, it is relevant to note that the BKGB investigator was present throughout the course of the interview.)

3. (SBU) Raising the possibility of an independent doctor's visit, per the parameters described in reftel B, Zeltser was skeptical of the usefulness. He said that no Belarusian national will "do anything other than what they are told to do," but said that he would discuss the matter with his lawyer, Dmitriy Goryachko.

4. (SBU) Conoff shared with Zeltser the DOS' request for his release on humanitarian grounds as well as related press statements and clippings. Zeltser expressed his appreciation for Conoff's visit, asked that the DOS continue to appeal for his release and speak to a wide audience of international press about his condition and case. He requested that we convey this information to his family.

Comment

5. (SBU) Zeltser's self-described health concerns are corroborated by his overall appearance and difficulties moving and talking. Although post agrees with Zeltser that the chances of finding a truly independent doctor to examine Zeltser in Belarus, we believe

this avenue merits exploration. We will reach out to Moscow and Vilnius in the hopes of finding a third-party doctor who may be less easily influenced by political forces at play.

Moore
Cloud